

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Assessment and Accountability in the Fifty States: 1999-2000**

WYOMING

*This profile was verified by the Wyoming Department of Education staff in June 2000.
All information was current as of that date.*

Index:

State Assessment System (1999-2000 school year)

Inclusion Policies for Assessment

Performance Standards

Reporting Performance Data

State Accountability System (1999-2000 school year)

Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools and Districts

Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress

State Assessment System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the assessment system as the context.

Statewide testing was mandated by the Wyoming Legislature through Enrolled Act 2 (1997), school reform legislation in 1998, and as a result of the Wyoming Supreme Court's decision related to a school finance lawsuit. The **Wyoming Comprehensive Assessment System (WyCAS)** also meets several important federal requirements. When Wyoming administered the WyCAS in the spring of 1999, this was the first time the state has ever had a statewide assessment.

The main feature of WyCAS is a set of assessments to measure student learning of the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards in language arts and mathematics, complemented by a norm-referenced test.

2. What are the characteristics of the state assessment system, including:

- *Name of Assessment Instrument(s) or Program(s)* The overall testing program is the Wyoming Comprehensive Assessment System (WyCAS) which consists of standards-based assessments and a norm-referenced assessment (TerraNova/CTBS).
- *Grade Levels and Subjects Tested*
 - Students in grades 4, 8, and 11 take standards-based assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics.
 - Students in grades 4, 8, and 11 also take the survey battery of the CTBS/TerraNova.
- *Norm or Criterion Referenced* Both
- *Matrix or Census Testing* The design is a combination of matrix and common (census) items. Eight forms are used and each form is comprised of approximately ½ common and ½ matrix items.
- *Item Types (including proportions if available via Internet or interview) such as: traditional or enhanced multiple choice, performance tasks, open-ended questions, portfolios, essays, etc.* The standards-based assessments include multiple-choice, constructed-response (short open-ended, should take 5-7 minutes), and extended-response (15-30 minutes). The norm-referenced assessment is multiple choice.
- *Time of Testing (specific month(s) or testing window)* Spring, usually late March or April
- *High School Exit Exam (date of implementation and/or phase-in timeline)* No high school exit exam
- *Other Assessments* NAEP
- *Transitional or Final Assessment System* Transitional system, phasing in final

3. *Who designed and produced the assessment(s) used by the state?*

The WyCAS system was proposed by the Statewide Assessment Design Team, which consisted of a superintendent, a principal, two teachers, one school district trustee, one state board of education member, one business representative, one member of the Wyoming Senate, one member of the Wyoming House of Representatives, and two parent representatives. While the team proposed the framework and policy guidelines, they were not responsible for selected assessments or writing test items. The group was facilitated and received technical support from the Wyoming Department of Education and several national testing experts.

Other groups that contributed to the development of WyCAS included:

- The Content Advisory Committees: comprised of Wyoming educators and education professionals, these committees ensure alignment between state assessments and standards
- The Bias and Sensitivity Review Committee: performs an annual equity review to ensure the testing program is fair to minorities and other educationally disadvantaged groups.

- The Technical Advisory Committee: a group of nationally recognized large scale assessment experts with various points of view who advise the Department of Education
- The Policy Advisory Committee: is designed to add the perspectives of citizens and policymakers to WyCAS implementation decisions.

Measured Progress (previously named Advanced Systems in Measurement and Evaluation, Inc.) was awarded the contract for overall testing program, while CTB/McGraw-Hill was awarded the sub-contract for the norm-referenced test and provides a survey battery of TerraNova (CTBS 5). In developing of the standards-based tests, committees of educators from across Wyoming and staff members of the WDE worked with Measured Progress to create test questions that match Wyoming's standards.

4. What are the state requirements for local assessment, including the types of assessments and their use in areas such as reporting and accountability, as well as Title I adequate yearly progress? What grade levels and subjects are tested?

Districts are required to administer their own tests, for local purposes, state accreditation requirements, and for Title I accountability. Local assessment systems have more flexibility than the state system because it is easier to use multiple assessment methods; Wyoming encourages local districts to use multiple methods when measuring student performance.

5. Is the state assessment system aligned with the state standards? Are there plans for alignment, and if so, how will the assessment and standards become aligned? Probe on:

For the majority of the tests, committees of educators from across Wyoming and staff members of the WDE worked with Measured Progress to create test questions that match Wyoming's standards.

In addition, the tests are reviewed by Content Advisory Committees (CACs), which are comprised of Wyoming education professionals including teachers from a range of grade levels as well as university educators and curriculum specialists. Separate committees have been and will continue to be convened for language arts and mathematics. The CAC, under the supervision of Measured Progress and the Department of Education, ensures the alignment of the assessment to standards, and that all standards are covered. This work is based on blueprints and test specifications developed by Measured Progress. They will serve this function each year with some members rotating on and off the committees.

6. What is the state's approach for ensuring alignment and what evidence of that alignment is provided?

The standards-based assessments are custom-designed based on the Wyoming standards. In addition, Content Advisory Committees composed of teachers review each test question, and each question must meet with their approval.

Alignment has been and will continue to be studied at various points in the development and implementation of the WyCAS. As items and tasks were selected by the Content Advisory

Committee under the supervision of Measured Progress for inclusion in the assessment, Measured Progress experts examined them for alignment to the standards.

- As the items and tasks of the WyCAS were organized into different forms for matrix sampling purposes, the Technical Advisory Committee examined them for breadth, depth and coverage.
- As item statistics became available, Measured Progress, CAC and the TAC examined this information for alignment in terms of actual experience of students with the ease or difficulty of the items.
- After the first administration of the WyCAS, the Content Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and Bias Committee examined the items and tasks in light of the actual item statistics and feedback from the field. This examination resulted in some items being discarded and/or replaced for subsequent versions.

7. *How is the data included in the state assessment system used?*

- *Student Grade Promotion/Retention, Graduation, Diploma Certification* No
- *Teacher, School and/or District accountability* No
- *Program Evaluation (Identify federal, state programs)* Yes, Title I, Perkins
- *Identification of students for programs like Title I, state CompEd, Bilingual, etc.* No
- *Instructional guidance to local administrators and/or teachers* Yes, in a broad sense; the unit of analysis is the school, not the class or individual student.
- *School improvement (e.g., preparing a school improvement plan)* Yes, see below.

The primary purpose of the state assessment system is school improvement: assessment to support school improvement should provide administrators and teachers information enabling them to increase student achievement. Other uses include: accountability to stakeholder groups (although not high stakes), statewide monitoring of student achievement, and providing national comparisons.

8. *Are there changes planned for the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?*

The state assessment system is evolving in response to state legislation and court rulings as well as in response to IASA Title I reauthorization. WyCAS was fully implemented in the 1999-2000 school year, and the WyCAS alternate assessment will be in place in the 2000-2001 school year.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of state assessment? Explain.*

There are inherent demands in the development and implementation of an assessment system and Wyoming officials highlighted some of these:

- Balancing psychometric and political demands; managing political issues outside the realm of test theory.

- Practical issues: a longer test would be more reliable but people resist testing students for lengthy periods of time.
- Ensuring smooth implementation and cooperation from administrators and teachers.
- Managing local control issues and resistance to perceived state government intervention.
- Resisting pressure from outside groups to implement a higher stakes assessment and accountability system, with greater rewards and sanctions.

Inclusion Policies for Assessment

1. What exclusions are made in the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP? Who makes the decision about exclusion of a particular child? Does the state collect data or in other ways monitor the number and types of students excluded? Does that vary by test?

As a rule, all Wyoming students will participate in an assessment in one of the following three ways:

- Participation in the general assessment without accommodations
- Participation in the general assessment with accommodations
- Participation in alternate assessments

During the 1999-2000 administration of WyCAS, over ninety-nine percent of students did participate in the assessment. The less than one percent of exemptions allowed for students who will subsequently participate in the Wyoming Alternate Assessment (WyCAS Alt) were for students with severe cognitive disabilities who were judged unable to participate in the WyCAS even with accommodations. The Department has commissioned a study by the National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO) to examine the Individual Educational Plans of these students to ensure that these exemptions were appropriate.

For any student not tested for any reason, districts and schools received the lowest scale score possible (200) averaged into their overall score. This policy was instituted to encourage schools and districts to make every effort to include all students in the WyCAS.

Participation exemptions were allowed only for the following categories.

- Students eligible to participate in the WyCAS Alt for the 1999-2000 test while the WyCAS Alt was piloted. These students are required to participate in the WyCAS Alt during the 2000-2001 testing year.
- Expelled students except special education students expelled but receiving services. These latter students must be tested.
- LEP students who have attended US schools for two years or less, have been tested for English proficiency and are judged to be unable to participate even with accommodations.
- Medically fragile students who provide documentation by a medical professional of the need for exemption.

The decision about how a student with disabilities will participate in an assessment is made by the student's IEP team. The decision about how a student on a 504 plan will participate in an assessment is made by the student's 504 team.

Limited English Proficient students are to be assessed to determine whether they should participate in the WyCAS using recognized tests such as the Idea Proficiency Tests, Language Assessment Scales, and Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey and a standardized achievement test. These requirements are described in the participation policies. LEP students who have completed their second year of school in the United States and who have been exempt from the assessment for the two previous years must be assessed in their third year.

2. What accommodations and/or modifications are made on the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP?

The following are broad categories of accommodations are allowed on state tests, additional accommodations are allowed on local assessments.

Timing/Scheduling: Provide flexible schedule, extend the time allotted to complete the test, administer the test in several sessions, administer the test over several days, allow frequent breaks during testing.

Setting: Administer the test individually in a separate location, administer the test to a small group in a separate location, provide special lighting, provide adaptive or special furniture, provide special acoustics, administer test in locations with minimal distractions.

Presentation: Braille edition or large-type edition, sign directions to students, student can ask for clarification, read directions to student, computer reads paper to student (math only), visual magnification devices, templates to reduce visible print, auditory amplification device, secure papers to work area with tape/magnets, questions read aloud to student (math only), masks or markers to maintain place, questions signed to student (math only), assistive devices.

Response: Graph paper, paper in alternative format (word processed, Braille, etc), Responses marked in test booklet rather than on answer sheet, use of word processor, student tapes response for later verbatim transcription, typewriter, communication device, dictation to a proctor/scribe, alternative response (oral, sign, typed, pointing), Braille, large diameter special grip pencil.

The specific accommodations available only to limited English proficient students include the following options.

Read aloud the math test (in English)

- Read aloud the math test (in student's primary language)
- Read aloud the instructions (in student's primary language)
- Provide individual administration (this may be necessary for read aloud administration)
- Allow use of English/primary language dictionary
- Clarify words at student's request (in English or in student's primary language)

3. Does the state provide assessments in languages other than English? If so, describe. In what grades and subjects?

Wyoming is advocating that Limited English Proficient students actively participate in the State assessment process. However, the State also recognizes that students who are in the process of acquiring English language skills may not have had the opportunity to adequately learn the content nor be able to access the information in the English-only assessment. To accommodate Wyoming's largest non-English speaking population – Spanish speakers – a Spanish version of the norm-referenced portion of the State assessment is available. However, the state cautions that although this Spanish version of the assessment is available, it may not be appropriate for all Spanish speakers. Therefore, it is imperative that districts appropriately identify and assess their LEP Spanish speaking students in order to make sound assessment decisions.

4. Does the state provide alternative assessments for students with disabilities? If so, describe. For which students and in which subjects and at what ages?

The WyCAS Alt, an alternate assessment for students with severe cognitive disabilities, has been developed for administration to the less than one percent of students who were unable to participate in the WyCAS even with accommodations. The alternate assessment is being pilot tested during the 1999-2000 school year and will be administered in its final form in 2000-2001. A small percentage (less than 1-2%) of Wyoming's students evidence very significant cognitive impairments or multiple severe disabilities. The Wyoming Department of Education has specified a set of expanded standards for these students. Students with significant cognitive disabilities and severe multiple disabilities will participate in alternate assessments. Data on their educational performance and progress will be collected through observation, interview/survey of others in their environments, record review, and/or performance events.

5. Does the state have a goal for the inclusion of students with disabilities and/or LEP students on the statewide tests? Does the state use any strategies to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities? LEP students?

Wyoming's Department of Education, State Board of Education and Legislature have set forth a philosophy of full inclusion in state law, board rule, and Department policy. The State intends that all students in Wyoming work toward the attainment of standards, be afforded every opportunity to achieve the standards, and participate fully in the WyCAS.

6. Are changes planned for the inclusion of SWD and LEP students in the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

No: the state has developed policies that encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities and low English proficiency, and no imminent changes are anticipated.

Performance Standards

1. How many and what performance levels has the state established for its assessments?

Wyoming has set four performance levels: advanced, proficient, partially proficient, and novice.

Following the first WyCAS administration and scoring, Content Committee members and other members of the Wyoming public participated in meetings to set performance cut points for each grade level of the assessment under the guidance of Measured Progress. The first set of results for WyCAS grade 8 and 11 based on these performance standards was forwarded to schools and districts in September of 1999 and for fourth grade in December 1999. Each performance level has a definition by subject; the following example is for reading:

- **Advanced:** Advanced readers demonstrate the ability to extend applications and connections beyond the obvious. These students understand complex ideas; they are insightful. They make strong, complex, and sophisticated connections among a variety of texts and themselves, other texts and the world. These students cite extensive, appropriate evidence for their inferences.
- **Proficient:** Proficient readers demonstrate an accurate understanding of a variety of grade-appropriate texts. Their comprehension extends beyond the literal level. They make relevant connections among texts, themselves, and other sources. They support inferences with textual evidence.
- **Partially Proficient:** Partially proficient readers demonstrate a better understanding of some types of texts than others. Comprehension is mostly at the literal level. They make some obvious personal connections.
- **Novice:** Novice readers demonstrate a minimal understanding of the text. They restate phrases from question or text, making no connections or generalizations.

The following table reflects criteria for Wyoming’s four performance levels as applied to the NRTs for use in the transitional definition of Adequate Yearly Progress. These levels were used in 1999-2000, but in subsequent academic years, the performance levels will be those that are set for the standards-based assessments.

Performance Level	Percentile Ranges
Advanced	71-99
Proficient	46-70
Partially Proficient	26-45
Novice	25 and below

2. Has the state set acceptable levels or targets for schools, districts or the state on tests, drop-out rates or other measures?

At the moment, Wyoming’s state target applies to Title I students: all students will become proficient by the end of ten years.

In addition, in accordance with the Wyoming Accreditation Regulations, each school shall adopt district student performance standards and site-specific student performance standards.

3. How are these performance standards calculated? What data are included in the calculations, and at what proportions (e.g. assessment results 60%, dropout and attendance

rates 40%). How are the calculations made? What is the final unit of analysis for reporting school and district achievement levels (e.g. performance index, grade, category)?

Prior to the administration of the WyCAS, overall performance standards descriptors were developed. Performance descriptors submitted and approved by a peer review panel of the U.S. Department of Education were specified by grade level and by standards strands. Following this, the Wyoming Department of Education and Measured Progress conducted a study to evaluate a method of standard setting that combined contrasting groups methods and a body of work methods of setting performance cut points. The results indicated that the combined method would be a reliable way of setting reasonable performance standards. The Technical Advisory Committee approved the use of this combined method for setting performance standards on the WyCAS. Following the first WyCAS administration and scoring, Content Committee members and other members of the Wyoming public participated in meetings to set performance cut points for each grade level of the assessment under the guidance of Measured Progress.

4. Are all students, schools and districts included in these performance calculations? If not, who is excluded?

All students will be accounted for in the school's total score, whether they take the assessment without changes, with accommodations, an alternative assessment, a Spanish-language assessment, or not at all. All students will be accounted for, but Wyoming is still deciding with technical advisors the best ways to report scores for all students.

5. Are changes planned for the state performance standards (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

No changes are anticipated in the near future.

6. What proportion of schools and/or districts fail to meet acceptable levels on performance targets?

Only applicable for Title I schools; please refer to section on Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress, below.

Reporting Performance Data

1. Describe the characteristics of the state performance data reporting system (by whom, what data, who is the audience) for each of the following levels:

Note: The Wyoming Assessment system is in the implementation phase, as is their reporting system. The state is working with SPSS to develop effective ways of communicating statistical data, particularly on the internet.

- *Student reports* Individual student results from the WyCAS are reported to parents via printed reports shipped directly from Measured Progress. This procedure allows the State to maintain the confidentiality of individual students. Individual student results are also reported in ways designed to assist the school in delivering instruction to improve student performance. Student Report for Parents/Guardians include information on each student's performance by performance level, score and range of probable scores. It also reports relative strengths and weaknesses and TerraNova results by national percentile rank.
- *School reports* The state produces school-level results showing data across students for schools and districts. Student achievement is categorized in performance levels.

- *District reports*

- ✓ District scores by subject and proficiency level are available on the state education website.
- ✓ In addition, individual districts may publish assessment results on their own websites. For example, the Big Horn County website publishes results on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills by grade and subject.

- *State reports*

The following types of data are available on the Wyoming Department of Education website

- ✓ **Background statistics** - enrollment and attendance, grade distribution, race and ethnicity, socio-economic indicators, special education.
- ✓ **Resource Indicators** – revenues, valuation and bonded debt, personnel resources, facilities.
- ✓ **Process Indicators** – expenditures, subject area staff allocations.
- ✓ **Results and other outcomes** – attendance rates, graduates, drop-outs, ACT scores. Also – WyCAS results by grade, subject, proficiency level, and district, not disaggregated.

- *Title I reports*

Wyoming compiles Title I reports including demographic information, participation rates, and disaggregated assessment data.

2. *How are the data distributed? When during the year (month or time period after assessment)? To whom (students, teachers, parents, the media, the community)?*

Wyoming reports data in the following ways:

- Newspaper and media reports. The Department conducted a workshop for the media to help them understand and communicate the results to the public. This venue allowed the Department to provide specific cautions to the media regarding technically accurate interpretations of the results. The media expressed great appreciation for this opportunity and these workshops will become an annual event at the time results are released.
- Website reports: Much of the above information is available on the Department of Education website.
- Print: Measured Progress provides printed reports for districts, schools, and parents. Measured Progress ships these directly to the schools.

3. *At what level(s) are data disaggregated (state, district and school levels)? For what groups are disaggregated data reported (see Internet sites for state, district and school level report cards*

Wyoming disaggregates data at the school, LEA, and State level in the following categories: gender, race/ethnicity, English proficient status, migrant, disabled vs. nondisabled, economically disadvantaged. The following assessments are disaggregated: WyCAS Standards-based assessments in reading, writing, and mathematics, percent at each proficiency level; TerraNova in reading, language arts, and mathematics,; average national percentile rank. Additional disaggregations are reported for: gifted/talented program participants, Title I participants, mobility (in building less/more than one year, in district less/more than one year).

The state seeks to ensure the confidentiality of any individually identifiable information. Hence, as a rule, the state does not release disaggregated data when sub-groups contain less than 10 students. State and district disaggregated results are made public through the media by gender. Disaggregated results for other subgroups are included on district and school reports.

4. *Does trend data exist from the state assessments (example: Texas State Assessment data is available from “1996-97 on”)?*

Little trend data is available as the WyCAS system is in the implementation phase.

5. *How are the results of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency reported? Are they included in the aggregate scores reported to the public, or disaggregated by group?*

The results of students with disabilities are included in the data if they took part in the assessment; in addition the state does disaggregate assessment data by disabilities and English proficiency level. This information is included in school reports if the group contains more than 10 students.

6. *What are the state’s requirements for the use of data in school and district improvement planning?*

Disaggregated reporting is required in Wyoming by State statute and State Board rules and regulations. State accreditation rules and guidance also require that this information is used in program evaluation, program planning, and school improvement planning. Schools are required to incorporate specific strategies and interventions into their school improvement plans to address subgroups that, by disaggregation of results, are not meeting state standards.

7. *Are changes planned for performance reporting (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the accountability system (Title I or in general)?*

The Wyoming Department of Education has been charged with the task of creating and maintaining a Uniform Reporting system that will allow the Wyoming Legislature and citizens to easily obtain accurate information about the status of public schools and student learning. To

this end, the Department of Education has been working to develop, as specified in the legislation and code, a comprehensive reporting system for schools, districts and WDE to use in reporting data about schools to the public.

The reporting requirements include:

- Drop out rates,
- Graduation rates,
- Title I data,
- Carl Perkins data,
- ACT scores,
- District demographic composition,
- Wyoming Comprehensive Assessment System results,
- Local assessment results,
- Disaggregation of achievement data by key demographic variables,
- Parent involvement rates related to accreditation,
- Accreditation status and information, and
- Staff development information.

Providing all of this information in one easily accessible location and format will help the legislature, other public officials, and citizens gain a much better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of Wyoming's public schools. The Wyoming Department of Education has worked closely with the National Center for Research on Student Standards and Testing (CRESST) to create this system. Wyoming is currently pilot-testing the system with several schools around the state, and the Uniform Reporting system should be in place during the academic year 2001-2002.

8. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of performance standards and reporting? Explain.

Wyoming officials note that explaining performance standards to educators and the public, even though many of them sat on standard setting committees has been a challenge. Because of the rhetoric surrounding standards-based reform initiative, many of the public expect there to be a "gold standard" and they do not always understand that all standard setting contains some normative aspects.

Another major challenge has been trying to teach educators, the media, legislators, and the public how to interpret scores, especially how to interpret small differences in scores. Further, many look for simple explanations to complex phenomena such as why one district scored higher or lower than another.

State Accountability System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the accountability system as the context.

The accountability system in Wyoming is based on accreditation. The goal of the accreditation process is to document the efforts of schools and districts to articulate and assess a challenging

Common Core of Knowledge and Skills and to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn and master those common cores. The obligation of the accreditation unit and the state accreditation team is to ensure that district and school efforts are proceeding in accordance with the Rules and Regulations and to provide technical assistance where feasible to facilitate these efforts.

2. *What are the characteristics of the state accountability system?*

- *Who is held accountable (students, schools, districts)?*
- *For what are they held accountable (adequate yearly progress, student achievement, processes, multiple non-cognitive indicators, etc)?*
- *Using what criteria (state assessments, local assessments, both state and local criteria)?*
- *To what targets or performance levels?*
- *With what consequences (promotion or graduation, program improvement, additional planning, state takeover, rewards, assistance, etc.)?*

Organize the response into the following subsections:

- *Student Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

There are no high stakes tests or other form of student accountability in Wyoming. However, as part of Enrolled Act 2, the legislature mandated and the State Board enacted that students graduating in 2003 demonstrate proficiency in English language arts and mathematics in order to graduate from a Wyoming high school. The class of 2004 will also have to demonstrate proficiency in science and social studies, by 2005 foreign language and health/PE will be required, and by 2006 vocational/career and fine and performing arts will be required.

- *School Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

Accountability in Wyoming is based on district, not school assessment. However, in some cases, this is synonymous, as there are many single-school districts in the state. In addition, most schools in Wyoming are accredited through the North Central Association (NCA). Finally, Title I accountability is both at the school and district levels.

- *District Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

Districts are held accountable through the accreditation process, which is based on eight components within the major areas of standards, measures, and school improvement. These eight components include:

- ✓ Student performance standards
- ✓ Measure of standards
- ✓ School improvement
- ✓ Parent/community involvement
- ✓ Staff development
- ✓ At-risk student status
- ✓ School climate assessment
- ✓ Facilities and budget.

Schools are to using scoring guides for a self-evaluation and by accreditation teams for on-site evaluations.

In the fall of every year, all schools and districts are required to submit an accreditation packet to the Department of Education. In addition, each District that will receive a site visit within that school year receives a request for self-assessment and more specific documentation of their activities to meet accreditation requirements.

The process is based on continuous quality improvement. The state depicts this as a circular process with the following elements: standards, measures, school improvement plan (SIP) profile, SIP goals, SIP action plan, target at-risk subgroups, staff development, SIP results (achieving standards).

Districts are to ask themselves the following questions:

- ✓ What should students know and be able to do?
- ✓ How good is good enough?
- ✓ How will you determine if they know it and can do it?
- ✓ What will you do if students do not know it or cannot do it?
- ✓ How will you teach them to do it?
- ✓ How will you make sure all students know it and can do it?
- ✓ How will you involve parents and the community to facilitate learning?
- ✓ How will we marshal our resources to serve student learning?

All public school districts and schools within those districts shall be granted one of the following accreditation levels by the State Board of Education on an annual basis:

(a) **Full Accreditation:** The local district and/or the schools within it have met the state accreditation standards in a fully satisfactory manner.

(b) **Conditional Accreditation:** The local district and/or the schools within it have met the state accreditation standards in less than a fully satisfactory manner.

(c) **Non-Accreditation:** The local district and/or the schools within it have not met the state accreditation standards. The State Board may attach penalties on an individual basis. (Ultimately, a non-accredited district could lose state funds)

(d) **Exemption:** The State Board of Education may exempt a school or district, upon presentation of a written plan, from any state policy or regulation. A time-line must be specified in the district's plan.

A small number of Wyoming districts are on conditional accreditation, and one has received a "warning" that it may be placed on conditional accreditation. If a district moves from full to conditional accreditation, they are closely monitored (or mentored) by accreditation personnel from the Department of Education and work to take the steps necessary to regain full accreditation.

Note: Wyoming is in the process of developing a Uniform Reporting system which should enable all education stakeholders to understand and interpret educational data. Wyoming views this new reporting system as an important component of their overall accountability system.

3. What methods of measuring progress are used in the state accountability system?

In an indirect manner, the state sets an absolute target for growth: all public school students shall meet student performance standards at the level set by the school and district in the following

areas: problem solving, interpersonal communications, keyboarding and computer applications, critical thinking, creativity, and life skills, including CPR.

The state does not set these standards, rather, the accreditation regulations indicate that the district has the responsibility for developing student performance standards. In addition, each school shall adopt district student performance standards and site-specific student performance standards and goals.

4. Are all students included in calculating the measures of progress? If not, who is excluded (probe on inclusion of SWD and LEP students)?

As noted in an earlier section on the inclusion of students with disabilities and low English proficiency, Wyoming has adopted a firm measure of inclusion. All students should be accounted for in measure of progress; if a student does not take an assessment and is not otherwise exempted, that student's score will be included as a "zero" in the overall measure of progress.

5. How do the general state accountability system and the system of accountability for Title I schools compare? Are they the same, or different? How?

All accountability in Wyoming is based on the WyCAS. However, the manner in which WyCAS data is used in Title I accountability and state accountability is somewhat different: whereas the Title I system of accountability is based on Adequate Yearly Progress, the state system of accountability is based on accreditation and the development of school improvement plans. However, state Title I documents note: Wyoming School Accreditation requires schools to develop an improvement plan. There should not be one improvement plan for regular education, and another for the Title I program. The Title I improvement plan is to be integrated into the overall plan.

6. Are subgroup performance results used as an indicator in the calculation of state accountability measures? If so, how? To identify schools or districts in need of improvement? For recognition and rewards?

Schools must use disaggregated data in planning school improvement activities for those subgroups that have not made adequate progress. At-risk populations and methods for improving their academic performance are to be targeted in the school improvement plan.

7. Are charter and/or non-public schools included in the accountability system? If so, how?

Wyoming has a system of institutional accreditation – very similar to that of regular school accreditation – which may be used for schools in atypical situations. However, Wyoming is in the process of developing charter school regulations, so the question of the accreditation of such schools has not been determined.

8. *Are changes planned for the state accountability system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

Accreditation regulations are reviewed on a five-year cycle; Wyoming is currently in the process of doing so. Several aspects of accreditation will be codified into rule and regulation. Further, new rules and regulations on student graduation requirements will be forthcoming this summer. Finally, the State will be exploring adding measures of student achievement to the school accreditation process so that all schools will be expected to demonstrate substantial and continuous improvement.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of accountability? Explain.*

One challenge in Wyoming is encouraging all education stakeholders to be engaged in the accreditation process. Some districts have not fully embraced the process. One way the department has found to address this issue is to take district administrators on the accreditation visits (generally a week-long process), to get a firsthand view of schools in which the accreditation process has had positive results.

Other problems stem from the fact that the department is very small, but Wyoming is a very large state, geographically.

Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools and Districts

1. *How are schools and districts identified as low performing? Using what criteria? Do the identification processes and/or criteria differ for Title I and non-Title I schools?*

At the moment, Wyoming does not have a system of identifying and assisting low-performing schools, aside from the Title I system. Given that more than half of Wyoming schools are Title I (and even more at the elementary school level), the state does help a substantial portion of those schools that are in need of improvement. In addition, schools that are low-performing – based on state accreditation – may receive additional state help if they so choose.

2. *Does the district or the state decide whether a school is low performing? If the district is involved in the process, how much discretion do they have?*

Aside from accreditation and Title I, the state does not identify low-performing schools. Please refer to the section on Title I, below.

3. *What types of assistance are provided to these schools and districts by the state?*

- *Evaluation and Planning*
- *Financial*
- *Expert Assistance*

Aside from the accreditation process and Title I, the state does not provide assistance low-performing schools. Please refer to the section on Title I, below.

4. *Who provides the state assistance?*

- *School/district support teams*
- *Regional centers*
- *Distinguished educators*
- *SDE staff*
- *Other – Explain*

Aside from the accreditation process and Title I, the state does not provide assistance low-performing schools. Please refer to the section on Title I, below.

5. *Does support to Title I and all low performing schools and districts differ? Is support generally provided for all schools and districts, or are services specifically designed to help those that are low performing?*

Title I is the only system of support to low performing schools and districts.

6. *Has the state established a set of criteria and/or a process for getting schools and districts out of low performing status? If so, what do they include?*

Aside from the accreditation process and Title I, the state does not provide assistance low-performing schools. Please refer to the section on Title I, below.

7. *Once a school or district is identified as low performing, what types of plans must it prepare? Who are they submitted to once completed? How do they differ from other planning documents?*

Not applicable.

8. *Are changes planned for the state system of identifying and assisting low performing schools or districts (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

Wyoming may develop a system of identifying and assisting low performing schools that are not otherwise addressed by the Title I program. However, no concrete plans have been developed.

Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress

1. *What criteria are included in the definition of adequate yearly progress for schools and districts under Title I?*

- *What measures are used (relationship between cognitive/non-cognitive data)?*
- *What targets have been established?*
- *Are local assessment systems included as criteria? If so, does the state provide guidance? Monitor their use?*
- *Is subgroup performance included in the criteria?*

The following information on Adequate Yearly Progress in Wyoming pertains to the system that was in place for the 1999-2000 school year. Please refer to question 8, below for information on the final system of Adequate Yearly Progress.

The State is responsible for setting goals based on a timeline for reducing the percentage of students performing in the novice and partially proficient levels while substantially increasing the percentage in the proficient and advanced levels. The state outlines the procedures that must be followed, but the districts may determine which assessments are used and how they are weighted.

Districts are required to use the following steps to develop an appropriate target to demonstrate AYP:

1. Determine the number and percentage of students at each performance level for the school or district.
2. Compute the difference or gap between current performance and the goal of all students performing in at least the proficient level. This is done by subtracting the total percent of students currently reaching the proficient and advanced levels from the goal of 100%.
3. Determine the annual improvement rate for the school using 10 years as the duration within which the goal of 100% will be accomplished. This computation will yield the necessary annual improvement rate for the school.
4. Use the same method to determine the annual improvement rates for gender, LEP, economically disadvantaged, disabled, mobility, and migrant groups. Compute a separate annual improvement rate for each group in order to monitor improvement. Then, compute the percentage of students who were at or above the proficient level in the previous year, compute the percentage of students who were at or above the proficient level in the current year, and subtract.

Wyoming has special procedures for small schools as the results may be unstable for schools with few students. To obtain more stable and trustworthy results for small schools, scores are to be aggregated across groups and grade levels in each school, in a designated sequence, until they represent the results for a minimum of 25 students. Finally, Wyoming combines data over multiple years and uses a “rolling average” to stabilize the data set and to make conclusions more valid.

2. What are the definitions of adequate yearly progress for the following:

- *Title I schools and non-Title I schools*
- *Targeted vs. schoolwide programs, charter, non-public and small schools*
- *Districts*

Are these transitional or final definitions? If transitional, when will the final definitions be in place and what criteria and processes will they include?

The state is required to hold the LEA accountable for making adequate progress. This requirement will be accomplished by following the same procedures as described above. Furthermore, at least 50% of the schools in the district must be making adequate progress.

3. *What is the process for identifying those schools and districts that are not making adequate yearly progress under Title I? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools? If the districts plays a role, does the state provide guidance on local criteria?*

Systematic procedures were implemented for evaluation of the progress of the schools for which three years of data were available. Specifically, the state generated a series of questions and developed a checklist. Included in the checklist are the assessment results, the amount of progress, the percent of students meeting the standard, and the progress at advanced and novice levels. Responses to questions were assigned values ranging from zero to four, with lower scores being poor and higher scores being good. All schools that met their required rate (AYP) or within 2% were not rated on the checklist, but were considered to be making adequate progress. Schools that did not come within 2% of meeting their AYP were scored on the checklist to determine whether or not they qualified for improvement. Schools with a positive AYP comparison of 2% or higher and that have at least 60% of their students at the proficient level or above, using the most recent data period, were also scored using the checklist. These schools will be eligible for consideration as distinguished schools.

4. *What are the criteria and processes for identifying schools and districts in need of improvement under Title I? What plans must be prepared? How can a school or district get out of Program Improvement? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools?*

To determine if a school should be placed in school improvement the state has a set of procedures, relying on the AYP Checklist.

1. Calculate amount of progress compared to AYP
2. Percent of students meeting the standard.
3. Progress in decreasing percent novice and increasing percent advanced.
4. Total score: items 1-3 are summed. The following decision rules will apply to marginal schools based on the total score. Schools with a total score of:
 - 6 or below will be placed in Title I school improvement
 - 7 or 8, that had a score lower than 3 on question #2 (less than 50% of the students meeting standards in the latest year) will be placed in Title I school improvement.
 - 7 or 8, that have accomplished less than 60% of their required rate of improvement (AYP) will be placed in Title I school improvement.
 - 9 or above will not be placed in Title I school improvement although they may receive a warning.

Schools that do not show necessary improvement in the percentage of students (targeted or schoolwide) at or above the proficient performance level for two consecutive years will develop and execute a plan for appropriate school improvement activities. These school improvement plans should be created with input from and consultation with parents, the LEA, and the State's School Support Team or Distinguished Educators.

At least 50% of the schools in the district must be making adequate progress. If a district has over half of its schools in Title I school improvement, the district will be placed in Title I district

improvement. If half of a district's schools are in Title I school improvement, the district is categorized as a marginal district.

5. *What types of assistance are provided to those in need of improvement under Title I?*

- *Evaluation and Planning* yes
- *Financial* yes
- *Expert Assistance* yes

6. *Who provides the assistance?*

School/district support teams

Regional centers yes, but these are not funded by the state

Distinguished educators yes, see below

SDE staff yes, see below

Other – Explain

Wyoming provides several forms of assistance for schools and districts in need of improvement. First, the state has contracted with a Distinguished educator who conducts site visits with each school that is in need of improvement. She reviews school data, strategies, and reforms, then helps the schools to develop new improvement plans.

Another source of technical assistance is the Common Core Coalition, operated by the Department of Education and curriculum advisors from the University of Wyoming. The language arts and math curriculum consultants make direct contact with all the schools in school improvement, determine which curricular the programs they are using, and follow up with workshops or another form of professional development.

In addition, Department of Education assessment staff will work with districts on assessment issues such as forming multiple measures, interpretation of test data, etc. A liaison from the state is assigned to each district that is in need of improvement.

Finally, the department of education organizes a school improvement conference with NCA that includes specific sessions for schools that are targeted as in need of improvement.

7. *Have waivers played a role in this process?*

Not particularly.

8. *Are there future plans for the state system for schools or districts receiving Title I funding (proposed or enacted and to be implemented) or for the definition of adequate yearly progress? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

During the 1999-2000 academic year, Wyoming completed implementation of the WyCAS system, and will phase out its transitional AYP definition. Following is a description of the system of Adequate Yearly Progress that should be in effect for subsequent academic years.

The WyCAS forms the basis for the final Adequate Yearly Progress system, to be called Substantial Continuous Improvement (SCI). This system has been drafted and studied and is being prepared for implementation and training of Title I schools. The AYP approach described below has been confirmed as appropriate to the unique conditions that affect decisions about adequate yearly progress in Wyoming schools. Use of this same system for reporting the progress of all schools in Wyoming is being considered.

Method for Determining School Progress:

Substantial Continuous Improvement (SCI) for the final AYP is based on WyCAS and supplemented by local assessments on off-levels due to the small school sizes affecting reliability of data. SCI, similar to the Transitional AYP, employs a projected expected performance line over a ten-year period. The number of advanced and proficient students are subtracted from the total number of students in a school to find the number of partially proficient and novice students and divided by ten to obtain the required rate of progress. This rate becomes the school's goal for SCI. The model uses a hierarchical linear model, with slopes as outcomes, and multiple years of data to determine whether schools are making substantial continuous improvement.

Each point of achievement above the goal is made up of two years of data across multiple content areas. Rolling averages will be used for each of the data points similar to the methodologies used in the Transitional AYP, but based on the WyCAS as opposed to NRT and local assessments in the transitional plan. The WyCAS employs a multiple measures approach by including a standards-based multi-dimensional assessment that covers all of the reading, writing and mathematics standards, and the TerraNova norm-referenced test. As long as the school remains above the projected goal line, the school is not classified as a school in need of improvement. Each year the school dips below that line (based on the rolling averages containing two years of data), the school becomes a school in need of improvement, subject to improvement in two out of the next three years (rolling averages).

Method for Determining District Progress:

A district in which more than half of the Title I schools are classified as in need of improvement becomes a district in need of improvement. A district may also be classified as a district in need of improvement even when half or fewer of their schools are classified as in need of improvement if the district overall fails to meet SCI.

Method for Schools with No State Testing

Wyoming has only 3 schools that fall into this category. They are K-2 schools and are required to assess these students on developmentally appropriate measures and report results for purposes of establishing attainment of SCI.

Method for Including Mobile Students:

Students who attend a school for eight months or less are not included in the school's average, but are included in the district average so that these students are counted. These students affect the district's overall SCI.

Method for Including Local Assessments:

The role of local assessments in determining adequate yearly progress for Title I schools will be included in the second phase of SCI analysis. As per district assessment plans that must be approved by Wyoming Department of Education, districts will report local standards-based assessment results for language arts in first grade and mathematics in second grade to be used in addition to WyCAS and NRT results to help determine if schools are making adequate progress. The quality of these measures is monitored through several steps that are a part of the Title I requirement and steps that are a part of the accreditation requirements.

Students included in Targeted Assistance Schools:

Targeted assistance schools must report a minimum of 25 students at a school. The procedure is specified to ensure consistency across Wyoming's small schools. Due to the size of schools in Wyoming, this requirement has meant that targeted assistance schools have assessed all students and disaggregated students who participate in targeted assisted programs. In order to assess adequate yearly progress, both results are examined. If the whole school is making progress and the numbers in the targeted assisted schools are less than 25, but disaggregated results for targeted assisted students do not show adequate progress, these results are brought to the attention of the school. A decision to identify such a school as "in need of improvement" would be made on the basis of three years results (baseline, and two additional years) in order to improve the quality of the information upon which the determination is made.

9. Is there alignment between Title I and non-Title I systems for adequate yearly progress?

The Title I and non-Title I systems of adequate yearly progress are somewhat aligned: WyCAS forms the basis for both systems, and both require evidence of improvement in student performance for the school overall and for disaggregated subgroups of students. The general state system monitors this progress through the accreditation and reporting system, both of which apply to all schools, regardless of Title I status. However, the Title I system of determining adequate early progress (or Substantial Continuous Improvement) is, at this time, distinct from the state system.

10. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of Title I? Explain.

The major challenge has been the institution of a state-wide assessment and accountability system where none had been present at anytime in the State's history. Under the transitional plan, local educators had a fair amount of control in selecting and weighing multiple assessments to determine student and school levels of proficiency, however, under the final plan, they will not have this degree of local control because of the need to implement a more uniform and fair

system. Another major issue with which Wyoming officials are concerned is the development and expansion of forms of technical assistance. In addition, Wyoming is a large state with a small population; getting out to some of the outlying schools can pose challenges.

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